

Attachment IV Written Comments, received after case report as issued on 12/4/2008

"Linda Frey"

[REDACTED]

12/11/2008 10:09 AM

To [REDACTED]

cc [REDACTED]

Subject support for reform of Discretionary Review Process

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
San Francisco Planning Department
1650 Mission Street, Suite 400
San Francisco, CA 94103

Re: Letter in Support of Discretionary Review Reform

Dear Commission President Christina Olague:

We are writing to indicate our support for the Planning Commission and Planning Department's efforts to reform the Discretionary Review process. Under the current DR process, there are too many opportunities for abuses, such as frivolous DR hearings that squander time and resources of not only homeowners wanting to improve their homes but also the Planning Commission and Planning Department.

In July of 2008, our uphill neighbors requested a discretionary review of our plans to add a small, one-story addition (250 square feet) to the back of our home in Glen Park. In preparing these plans, we had carefully followed all of the Planning Department requirements, and had worked closely with an architect to ensure that what we were proposing was covered by the code and well within our rights as homeowners. We were not requesting any exceptions or variances to complete the remodeling project, and Planning Department staff indicated both to us and to our architect that the neighbors' request did not in fact constitute "exceptional or extraordinary circumstances." Nonetheless, we were informed that the request would necessarily result in a discretionary review process that would have significantly delayed our project, and would have resulted in significant expense for additional drawings and analysis by our architect. As a result, we were forced to accept an unfortunate modification to our plans that requires us to lower the ceiling in part of our new kitchen (resulting in three different ceiling heights in one room!) as well as a significant reduction in our cabinet space. All of this to cut an 18 inch by 18 inch chunk out of the ceiling of our addition, which our neighbors seem to think will increase the light they get through a small window at the back of their house (!?)

Of course, it is completely fair that neighbors should be notified of projects such as this and should have the right to raise concerns. However, in our view, a case like ours

should have been decided quickly – and at almost no cost – based on the judgment of the Planning Department that this particular request did not constitute "exceptional or extraordinary circumstances."

The proposed improvements to the Discretionary Review process are well-designed, comprehensive, and will be a benefit to all. The proposed improvements to the Planning Department's internal review will provide a more predictable and consistent process for permitting and will minimize the arbitrary and political nature of the current DR process.

We greatly appreciate the Planning Commission and Planning Department being proactive in improving the DR process. Please approve the Planning Department's proposed improvements.

Sincerely,

Linda Frey and Noah Goldberg, 